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MOVING TO GET AHEAD: DOES IT PAY?

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There has been much talk about the roller-coaster of change that has been experienced in Alberta cities with the rise and fall of the oil market. During the period from the mid 1970s to the present, Edmonton experienced rapid population growth (e.g. 21% in the seven years from 1976 to 1983, see Kennedy and Mehra, forthcoming) followed by a sudden decline. The overriding impression left is of a society expanding and contracting with such great speed that cracks began to appear in the social fabric. At the beginning of the boom it was said that many people arrived in search of employment and the promise of high wages and quick promotion. The perception of Alberta as the land of opportunity was underlined by high employment and good pay. During the boom, services were strained and housing prices rose dramatically as the demand rose. Many social problems appeared, the most apparent being the rise in family breakdown, attributed to the transiency of the population and the rising expectations which came with the boom.

When the economic bust came in 1982, a different set of concerns emerged in popular discussion. The opportunities for jobs and advancement disappeared. Much talk centred around the drop in services to groups vulnerable to the effects of rapid change. These included the young and single or separated individuals. This service decline was compounded, it is argued, by the downturn in economic fortunes. The rising costs of mortgage money made housing unaffordable to many. The increase in unemployment eroded incomes and forced people out of the province in search of new jobs.

Of concern throughout this decade of change was the impact that variations in population composition were having on the community and the role that migration was playing in fueling the economic growth of the city. The experiences of migrants compared with non-migrants in a fast changing economic environment such as Edmonton presents an important focus for the study of social change. The opportunities afforded by rapid growth and the problems that are encountered with rapid downturn create different pictures of social adaptation. Studied over time in the same community, we can benefit from analysis which tells us whether or not the migrant or the non-migrant will have greater success in these environments.

Migration and Economic Status

In early research on urbanization, it is asserted that there is a positive relationship between migration and upward social mobility (Zimmerman, 1927). This contention derives from research done on movements from rural to urban environments, where improved salaries and job opportunities appear to

be guaranteed with migration. Leslie and Richardson (1961) report that where people feel that they are making improvements by moving, there is great likelihood that they will move. Canadian economists working in this area have also argued that people move (all things being equal) as a form of natural adjustment to the economic conditions in their own regions (Courchene quoted in Mathews, 1982:60). Grant and Vanderkamp (1976) claim that in the year in which the move is made, the typical Canadian migrant increases income slightly compared with the typical stayer that is left behind, even though the mover is more prone to experience unemployment. This unemployment is partly attributable to uncertainty, leading to longer time for settlement and job search. The assumption underlying this approach is that migrants will benefit from this move to areas of economic prosperity.

While it may be the case that migrants do better than the people they leave behind, Perkinson (1980) reports that migrants moving to rural areas tend to be financially disadvantaged when compared to non-migrants. He attributes these lower incomes to lower skills and educational disadvantages of movers. He argues, then, that the disadvantage comes because of the characteristics of the movers relative to the non-movers. Further, findings from some urban areas (Perkinson,1980) show that migrants do better than non-migrants in their income differentials, due mainly to their younger age and better education.

Tepperman (1985) looks specifically at migrants coming to Alberta during the boom period. He explains that economic opportunities were better in the 1970s in comparison with the declining economies of eastern Canada. "As this differential opened up, young educated people became even more inclined to come to Alberta to look for a job and not simply to accept a job or a transfer there by an employee" (Tepperman, 1985:53). Contrary to expectations, Tepperman finds that, in terms of occupational mobility of migrants, they have experienced more downward than upward mobility. The hardest hit are women who occupy the clerical and service professions. Tepperman's findings indicate that as the work force experiences rapid development, as was the case in Alberta, a change in fortune for migrants is more imaginary than real. The image of the fast rising individual who benefits from a move is not borne out in this research. Yet this image is still strong, leading many people to believe that one can improve one's financial standing simply by moving to a better economy.

Tepperman's findings related to occupational structure alert us to the possibility that migrants may be financially disadvantaged after a move to a booming economy. However, set into the context of previous research reported above, we would expect that migration, although not improving migrants' own economic status, should still benefit movers over non-movers in the new location provided certain

conditions are met. Being younger and having higher education, for example, should help migrants fare better than non-migrants. This would be especially true, we would assume, in areas where a vast array of job opportunities appear with economic growth.

Following this line of inquiry, the following research will address a number of questions related to the impact of migration on individual financial status. First, who are the migrants who came to Edmonton? Second, are they better off or worse off than the non-migrants? Third, does the difference between migrants and non-migrants, if any, change over time with boom and bust? Fourth, when compared to non-migrants, controlling for the characteristics of respondents, are migrants better off or worse off than non-migrants? Fifth, looking at migrants and non-migrants separately, what factors affect their economic standing?

Methodology

Rather than taking stock of the change after it has occurred, is there a way in which we can monitor it while it is happening to provide insights into the impact that it is having on individuals? This problem of monitoring has led us to acknowledge the value of longitudinal surveys. They provide a tool for developing a moving picture of change documenting relative, as well as absolute, differences in peoples' experience over time.

One of the best known survey of community structure carried out over time is the Detroit Area Study, begun in 1952 as a mechanism whereby academic training and research are combined to provide a unique record of the life of a city over a long period of time. As Shuman (1977) describes the study, it has evolved to meet four major objectives. First, there has been some attempt to make the study relevant to the immediate need of describing conditions in Detroit, through descriptive analysis of the area population, for use by community organizations. Second, the study has been used for methodological research on sampling and questionnaire design. Third, the study allows for replication and testing of ideas from earlier research, thereby providing value to archival data. Fourth, the study provides a basis for the evaluation of social change. As Shuman states it, "...as an Area Study unit develops over the years, it puts itself into a better and better position to measure social and cultural change by repeating questions at strategic intervals." (137)

The Detroit Area Study has received some criticism of its inability to monitor social change. The study operates from the idea that the topic areas would change every year. As a result, it has been

argued (Leggett, 1977) the study missed any detailed analysis of underlying class-racial structures in the City of Detroit and their connections to "collectives in motion". Leggett is especially criticial of the fact that the DAS gave no indication of the possibility of the Detroit riots which caused such a great upheaval in the city in 1967. The prediction of such an event seems to be beyond the capability of a social survey. However, what a study such as this can provide is a view of the contradictions and differences that appear over time in a city.

It is with these ideas in mind that we started the Edmonton Area Study in the Fall of 1976. The study was not begun as a longitudinal assessment of change in the city (we were not blessed with long term funding and thus in the position to plan on a five or ten year basis). However, we were conscious of the major changes that the city was undergoing at the time and tried to incorporate measures which could be replicated over time, following the logic of the longitudinal model outlined by Shuman above. The success of this monitoring process is limited to some extent by the fact that it was too expensive to run the study as a panel, where individuals were followed from year to year. However, improving on the DAS model, there has been replication of items from a cross-sectional sample of representative individuals which has provided the basis for long term assessment of social change in the community. This format provides an ideal basis upon which to compare the experiences of migrants versus non-migrants over time.

The data presented below are drawn from five Edmonton Area Studies (1980-1984). These studies were conducted by the Population Research Laboratory at the University of Alberta. The studies involved a personal interview with a random sample of Edmonton residents 18 years of age and over. In each of the five studies, which ranged in size from 399 to 506 respondents for a combined sample of 2207, respondents were asked to provide information on themselves and the characteristics of their household. For a detailed description of sampling procedures, see Kinzel (1985).

Measures

The dependent variable, income differential, is measured by calculating the difference in gross household income from the overall average income for all respondents for each year. This calculation helps illustrate the relative value of income levels of respondents, thus aiding in outlining net benefits or disadvantages experienced in competing in the economy. Household income is used as it reflects the earning power of all individuals in a household coming into Edmonton and helps to isolate the effects

of second income in raising family incomes higher than those for single or divorced individuals living alone.

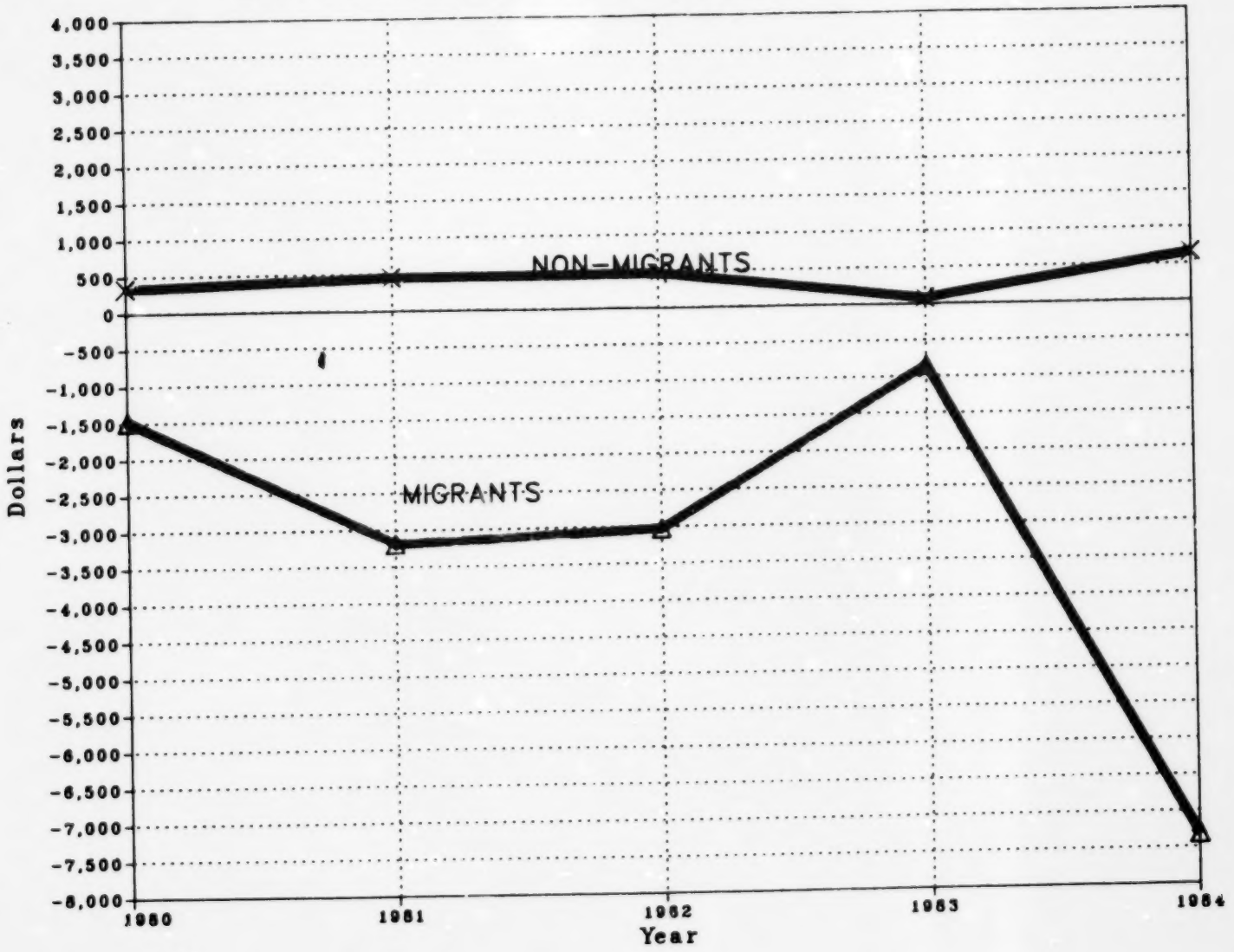
Migration status is measured by designating people who have lived in the city for only two years as being recent migrants (1) and others as non-migrants (2). Our measure of migration status is calculated to reflect a period of adjustment for individuals new to the city. Other independent variables include marital status, measured here as married/common law (1) and all others (0). The marital status variable takes on importance for the reasons mentioned above concerning the impact that household income drawing on salaries from dual career families can have. In addition, Tepperman (1985) reports that women are more likely to accompany their spouses to Alberta. The importance that this may have on affecting the female partner's earning power may be revealed by the analysis which compares married versus unmarried women in adjusting to migration. To aid in this analysis, we have added a gender variable measured as male (0) and female (1).

The level of education and its importance for the advantages it provides in competing for jobs and good incomes has already been outlined above. We use a simple count of educational level in years. Related to education is the occupational achievement of individuals. The three categories included here are sales/clerical occupations (yes=1,no=0); managerial/professional occupations (yes=1,no=0); and construction/transportation occupations (yes=1,no=0). Respondent employment status was measured by employed (1) and other employment status (including housewife, student and unemployed, 0). Age is also an important factor in affecting migration and in competing for good jobs. We include age measured here in years. We have, in addition, a variable which includes as values the years of the five studies, to serve as a control for changes that may take place over the period from 1980 to 1984. A final measure is the respondent's ethnicity (British/Canadian=1,other=0). This measure is added to establish if immigration status and the problems of assimilation into the culture may have an adverse affect on income levels.

Findings

Looking first at income differentials across time we see some major differences appearing according to migration status (see Figure 1). In terms of household income differentials, we note a steady decrease in migrant incomes from 1980 to 1981, a slight recovery in 1983, and then a major downturn in 1984. Non-migrants' household incomes stay on the positive side of the scale. Their incomes increase against

Figure 1
COMPARISON OF MIGRANT NON-MIGRANT
GROSS HOUSEHOLD INCOME DIFFERENTIAL



the average from 1980 to 1982, decrease in 1983, and then rebound in 1984. As these income measures reflect previous year's income levels, we can see clearly that the time of the economic bust in Alberta (occurring in 1982) left a mark on Edmonton residents, but moreso on recent migrants to the city.

These figures reflect the changes that occur with the arrival of migrants in a changing economy where non-migrants clearly are at an advantage in competing for high paying jobs. These findings support Perkinson (1980). However, what factors may contribute to income levels in migrants versus non-migrants explaining these contrasts? Further, are these differences constant over time or do they vary according to the impact that different factors in the economy may have on income levels? To answer this question, we can look at characteristics of individuals which may bring about differences in their income levels.

In examining Table 1, we find that migrants tend to be younger, single, better educated, and more likely to be fully employed. Given these findings, does migration status have significant effects on income differential after controlling for these other relevant variables? Second, are these effects on income of other independent variables conditioned by migration status through an interaction effect?

Looking at Table 2 which presents regression results on all variables against household income for the total sample, we see that migration status, holding constant other factors such as age, sex, occupational status, marital status, ethnicity, and years of education, has significant effects on the level of respondent incomes. Migrants, on average, earn $3918 less than non-migrants. Income level is not affected by time of arrival in the city. Not surprisingly, the strongest predictor of income levels is marital status, with income rising with the contribution that two earners make to this total. This effect is not strong enough, however, to offset the influence of migration status on income levels.

Another point of note in these results is the finding that belonging to the managerial/professional class ensures high incomes relative to others. However, the sales/ service employees and those in construction and transportation are clearly spread over the income levels, therefore not producing any effect on income differentials. Work status creates significant differences in income, with those fully employed earning $5542 more, on average, than those who are not full time in the labor force.

These findings indicate a definite advantage of non-migrants over migrants in income levels, holding constant personal characteristics. They do raise the further question, however, concerning the conditioning effects that migration status may have on the relationship between respondent characteristics and income levels. Are certain factors more important in raising income for the

TABLE 1: Selected Characteristics of Migrants Compared with Non-Migrants

	Migrants (N=275)	Non-Migrants (N=1925)
% Female	44.0*	50.4
% Married	53.5*	60.5
% British/Canadian	48.9	52.2
% Managerial/Professional	36.7*	29.3
% Sales/Clerical Occupations	34.2	39.9
% Farm-Const-Transp Occupations	23.3	25.4
% Employment Status	63.5*	56.0
$\bar{X}$ Age	28.9+	40.3
$\bar{X}$ Education	13.9$^{\Delta}$	12.8
$\bar{X}$ Gross Household Income Differential	-2819.68$^{\Delta}$	403.96

+ P= < .001

$^{\Delta}$ P= < .01 where migrants significantly differ from non-migrants

* P= < .05

TABLE 2: Determinants of Household Income Differentials: Reduced-Form Multiple Regression Equations[x] by Migration Status

	Total (N=2207)	Migrants (N=275)	Non-Migrants (N=1925)
Years of Study	115.19	- 178.36	139.97
	(226.52)	(660.35)	(241.56)
	[0.01]	[- 0.02]	[0.01]
Gender (Male=0) (Female=1)	- 754.19	4185.89 *	- 1292.09
	(761.10)	(2140.96)+	(817.11)
	[0.02]	[0.13]	[- 0.04]
Age	- 29.84	75.32	- 36.40
	(22.55)	(90.42)	(23.61)
	[- .03]	[0.05]	[- 0.04]
Managerial/Prof. Occupation (yes=1) (no=0)	4328.34 *	4832.18	4445.73 *
	(1560.77)	(4238.22)	(1690.46)
	[0.12]	[0.15]	[0.12]
Ethnicity (Cdn./British=1) (other=0)	906.76	- 18.92	951.57
	(637.23)	(1761.64)	(683.26)
	[0.03]	[0.00]	[0.03]
Marital Status (married/common-law=1) (other=0)	10440.41 *	6238.09 *	10944.15 *
	(647.52)	(1816.38)+	(695.92)
	[0.31]	[0.20]	[0.32]
Migration Status (migrant=1) (non-migrant=2)	3917.61 *	-----	-----
	(988.48)	-----	-----
	[0.08]	-----	-----
Years of Education	666.69 *	704.36 *	671.85 *
	(109.81)	(356.61)	(116.89)
	[0.14]	[0.13]	[0.14]
Sales/Clerical Occupation (yes=1) (no=0)	166.92	- 1130.91	337.94
	(1464.20)	(4190.17)	(1586.31)
	[0.01]	[- 0.03]	[0.01]
Farm-Const-Trans Occupation (yes=1) (no=0)	1620.13	11073.12 *	556.30
	(1583.74)	(4244.10)	(1722.61)
	[0.04]	[0.30]+	[0.01]
Respondent's Work Status (employed=1) (other=0)	5542.33 *	6463.28 *	5380.25 *
	(712.35)	(1938.58)	(769.47)
	[0.17]	[0.20]	[0.16]
constant	-35461.63	- 13406.05	- 29250.36
R^2	.20	.18	.21

*P < .05

+ The difference between regression coefficients for the same variable in the migrants versus non-migrants equation is statistically significant (P < .05), using a two-tailed t-test employing $\sqrt{SE_1^2 + SE_2^2}$ to calculate the standard error of differences between coefficients (adapted from Pfeffer and Ross, 1982).

x In each cell in this table, the first entry is the unstandardized regression coefficient (b), the second is the standard error of the coefficient (SE) and the third is the standardized regression coefficient (Beta).

non-migrant versus migrant group?

Looking first at migrants, we find five major factors predicting variation in income levels. Migrants working in construction and transportation earn relatively higher incomes than migrants in other job categories (+$11,073). Being employed full time significantly increases household incomes, as well (+6463). Added to this is the effect that being married (+$6,238) and having a high level of education (+$704) has on improving one's income. Female migrants also make significantly more money than males ($4,186), even controlling for other factors. Year of arrival in the city does not seem to be important in raising or lowering income levels among migrants.

When we examine the results for non-migrants, we find that marital status is the most important predictor of income level (+$10,944). Next is the impact of work status (+5,380), education (+671) and being in managerial/professional ranks (+$4,445). Again, as with migrants, the year of the study does not affect the income levels of non-migrants.

Our question about the conditioning influence of migration on the effects of other independent variables requires a comparison of slopes (unstandardized regression coefficients) across these two samples (Table 2). Substantial differences emerge on the occupational variables where non-migrants in construction and transportation trades make significantly lower incomes than migrants with the same background. While this factor is not important in predicting differences in income across the whole sample, the migration status of respondents does create a difference in this relationship.

The effects of migration are felt on marital status, in an opposite direction, where married migrants do significantly poorer in income achievement than non-migrants. There is a mild surprise in these findings, however. We discover that female migrants are significantly better off than female non-migrants. This finding provokes some speculation about the impact that education and marital status may have on influencing the earning power of females versus males.

Summary and Conclusions

In reviewing the effects that migration has on the economic status of individuals coming to a city undergoing rapid population change, we find that even when controlling for the demographic characteristics of respondents, migrants are disadvantaged in terms of income. However, there are certain groups of migrants who have benefited from the move when compared to non-migrants. These include women (presumably single women) and those working in construction and transportation

industries. Being married creates advantages, however, for non-migrants. Being in professional occupations benefits individual non-migrants when compared to one another but not when compared to migrants. The idea that migration will benefit migrants over non-migrants in an area with many job opportunities, which is expanding economically, then, is only partially supported by the data.

There may be a number of reasons for these findings. The overall disadvantage of migrants versus non-migrants may be geographic. Edmonton provides a rather small employment market and thus the ability to advance through income increase is not as great as would be the case in a larger metropolitan centre. Further, Grant and Vanderkamp (1976:6) argue that long distance moves may leave migrants at a disadvantage because the need to search out jobs in an unknown area lengthens the time of unemployment. As many moves to Alberta from the rest of Canada involve long distance migration this may partially explain the migrants' disadvantage.

A related point may be that this migration attracts people who are inexperienced in the labour force and who see the opportunity for long term advancement coming through migration. The temporary disadvantage that they suffer from the move, when compared to non-migrants, may be offset by a long term career benefit. This seems especially true in the construction and transportation areas. It could be argued, in fact, that migrants arrived with higher skill levels than non-migrants in these trades and were paid accordingly. Also, the "boomer" role that they played may have had them working longer hours, with more overtime, taking advantage of the high volume of work while it lasted. These groups may have had their eyes on having to return home, therefore they worked to assure larger earnings than those residents who called Edmonton home.

The findings related to marital status may derive from our focus on household income. Following from Tepperman's findings reported above, many of the migrants may have come to Edmonton to pursue job opportunities for one member of the family. The spouse followed and may have taken some time in finding a job in the first two years of the stay here. The long term benefits of the move, it may have been argued, were offset by the short term pain of living on one income. The provocative finding related to the higher level of income for migrant versus non-migrant women may be seen to contradict this view, although we need to remember that the non-migrants include a large number of older, non-working females. It may also be true, as Tepperman points out, that while women did not improve their occupational rank through the move to Edmonton, they still improved their incomes. The factors which affect female migration deserve further study to uncover the complexities of this issue. Moving to get ahead is a broadly supported strategy in our society. The

benefits that come from moving into a boom economy must be viewed in the context of the cost that may be incurred when the economy goes bust. It seems, though, that moving does pay for some groups of wage-earners,such as women, who may be disadvantaged overall by staying in one place.

These findings deserve further investigation. What is clear is that advantages occur in assessing the experience of the migrants compared to non-migrants through the use of a longitudinal study design. The evolution of the community over time and the change that new individuals bring to an environment is enhanced by the monitoring function provided by the studies' format. The role that this type of study can play in policy analysis may become a bit more obvious when we see the impact that lower incomes of migrants have on residential housing markets, on job structures, and on the services provided in the host city. The potential for another boom period for the City of Edmonton requires that we anticipate in our plans for physical and social services the impact that these movers will have on the city and vis versa.

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